

## ONE PROCESS FOR BEGINNING THE RESEARCH PROJECT AND MAINTAINING ITS CENTRALITY TO THE PROGRAM

What follows is a process that I have used with considerable success in getting students started on their research, keeping the research a visible and shared aspect of the program work, and moving research teams from initial topic to the Preliminary Statement and on to the Research Prospectus. This can be done successfully in a group contract or a small (two-faculty program). If the program is larger, it becomes a bit unwieldy but can be adapted. The particular process described here is drawn from a two-quarter group contract on Historical Capitalism and Globalization.

Time was provided through the quarter's early weeks to enable students to explore possible research topics, form collaborative research groups, and engage in preliminary research and reading. The process began in third week when, in the full seminar (or program), we first raised a large number of possible research subjects, then broke the seminar into three groups. Each group chose three or four broad subjects to discuss and spent an hour narrowing and refining these subjects and coming up with a list of focused topics as research possibilities. I collected and typed up the results of these small-group discussions, and in the following week we again discussed the lists.

From that point on, I left it to the students to form into research teams and do the research necessary to produce a Preliminary Statement and meet with me. Preliminary Statements were shared with the entire program with the idea that, once we were aware of all the research underway, these topics would enter into the seminar discussions when relevant. In addition, I created several "cluster groups," each of which included two to four research teams where there was either some overlap in subject matter or similar theoretical concerns. These groups were to work together in consultation and exchange materials, bibliographic citations, and preliminary writing through the entire research and writing process. Finally, a number of seminar sessions were devoted to the collective sharing of research in progress and to the critique, support, and analysis of one another's work, including conceptual frameworks and the articulation between theoretical development and historical evidence. This process was designed to continue through the winter quarter.

Through the winter, students frequently added their research findings/concerns/analysis to the ongoing discussions of the reading material. Seminar time was set aside throughout the quarter for discussion of research progress, conceptual problems, and various strategies and problems. Additionally, students met several times in their cluster groups for the same purpose and exchanged and discussed rough drafts within cluster groups. The week before the first draft was due was a "down week" with no scheduled class meetings but during which I met with each team. Papers came in at the end of the week; I read and critiqued them as did members of each cluster group. Final papers were submitted at the end of the ninth week and presentations made in the final week. By this time, everyone was quite familiar with all the research projects; and

the final presentations served to pull together and polish now familiar topics, rather than present entirely new material. This entire process, I believe, provided the necessary background and context for the very lively and well-informed discussions that followed each presentation.